

National Water Research and Development Initiative Act Passes, 413-10

Washington, DC –Congresswoman Betty McCollum's (MN-04) amendment to the *National Water Research and Development Initiative Act* (H.R. 1145), which establishes a comprehensive federal approach to water quality research that leverages all national and local partners, today passed the full House during a final vote. The amendment expands the larger bill to include a provision to evaluate the nation's water supply, in light of increased risk due to chemical contaminants, such as pharmaceuticals, personal care products, and endocrine disrupting compounds.

"My amendment responds to the growing concern over chemical impairments in our water supply and adds an important research objective to our national water policy. We know enough about these contaminants to be worried, but not enough to provide good information to our state health officials or our constituents. Research on these contaminants must become a federal priority," said Congresswoman McCollum.

The amendment, approved by the House, adds water quality as a primary focus of the bill, in addition to water quantity. Further, it places specific emphasis on scientific research of the impact of pharmaceuticals, personal care products, and endocrine disrupting compounds. Researchers have found that exposure to these contaminants can produce deformities and reproductive problems in aquatic species and insects. In addition, the measure leverages the existing regional network of 54, federally-funded, and grossly under-utilized, National Institutes for Water Resources located at higher education institutions across the country to support federal initiatives in water quality research.

"The National Water Research and Development Initiative Act has been greatly strengthened by Congresswoman McCollum's amendment, by emphasizing the connection between water quantity and water quality, and ensuring that the federal network of Water Resources Research Institutes will provide their expertise to the process of setting national water priorities," said Deborah Swackhamer, PhD., Co-Director of the Water Resources Center at the University of Minnesota.

As the House prepared to vote on the bill, which includes Congresswoman McCollum's amendment, she released the following statement:

I rise today to voice my strong support for the National Water Research and Development Initiative Act, and for this important amendment. I applaud Chairman Gordon and the members of the Science and Technology Committee for their leadership on this legislation.

My State of Minnesota contains over 10,000 lakes, the headwaters of the Mississippi River, and the largest of the Great Lakes - Lake Superior. Improving coordination of federal water research is critical for my state and for our country. And we need better data to make good policy.

This amendment includes important provisions to advance the goals of H.R. 1145.

First, the amendment clarifies the bill's focus to include both water quantity and quality. Federal jurisdiction on water policy tends to create a division between the two, but the science often overlaps. To achieve the goal of coordination of research across all federal agencies, it is important to support a comprehensive research agenda.

Second, in the area of water quality, this amendment adds a research objective related to chemical impairments in our water supply, specifically contaminants of emerging concern. These contaminants include pharmaceuticals, personal care products, and endocrine disrupting compounds. Researchers have found that exposure to these contaminants can produce deformities and reproductive problems in aquatic species and insects.

Today we know enough about these contaminants to be worried, but not enough to provide good information to our state health officials or our constituents. Research on these contaminants must become a federal priority.

Finally, the amendment will link the existing network of 54, federally-funded water research centers with the new federal water research plan called for by H.R. 1145. The National Institutes for Water Resources are located at institutions of higher education all across the country. This research network is an under-utilized resource. The amendment would make it a priority for the national water research institutes to support the goals of H.R. 1145. And it will increase coordination among the centers so they are more effective partners in federal water quality efforts.

This amendment promotes a federal approach to water research that is comprehensive, effective, and one that leverages all of our federal research partners. I encourage my colleagues to support this amendment and this bill.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations & Budget Committees.

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